



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice	Occupational Therapy
Chinese Medicine	Optometry
Chiropractic	Osteopathy
Dental	Pharmacy
Medical	Physiotherapy
Medical Radiation Practice	Podiatry
Nursing and Midwifery	Psychology

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Statement to ABC 7.30

3 July 2019

AHPRA works with 15 national health practitioner boards for patient safety and public protection.

We deal with concerns about the behaviour, performance or impairment of registered health practitioners which may require regulatory action, because they pose a risk to the public. There are around 740,000 registered health practitioners in Australia and we receive around 7000 notifications each year. We do not deal with notifications in New South Wales and only deal with the notifications referred to us by the Office of the Health Ombudsman in Queensland.

We assess each notification individually to identify risks to patient safety. We respond to all notifications as quickly as possible, depending on the nature of the concerns raised. If a notification raises issues about possible criminal behaviour, we liaise with the police. Police investigations take priority over regulatory matters. After we have taken any short-term action needed to manage risk to patients, further regulatory investigations are put on hold, pending the resolution of criminal processes.

Our performance is continuously improving. Since 1 July 2017, the average time to assess notifications has reduced by 12.7%. Despite a 20.9% increase in the number of notifications received since 1 July 2017, we have reduced the overall average time to manage a notification by 6.9%.

We are committed to improving our work. We are focused on reducing the time taken to investigate notifications, to better assess risks to patient safety, and improve our communication with notifiers and practitioners.

Our scheme has an independent Ombudsman, the National Health Practitioner Ombudsman and Privacy Commissioner. Anyone wanting to raise concerns about the way we do our work can contact the [Ombudsman](#). We also operate a whistle blower line if anyone wants to raise a public interest concern.

Communicating with notifiers and practitioners

Being part of a notification process for both a notifier and practitioner is stressful. We regularly survey practitioners and notifiers to identify ways to reduce stress and to improve our communication. Since November 2016, AHPRA has received more than 4,500 responses to our surveys from notifiers and practitioners. This has led to our 'Let's talk about it' [video series](#), launched earlier [this year](#).

We understand the importance of providing clear and timely information to notifiers and practitioners about our decisions. We have worked with National Boards to produce the *Common protocol for informing notifiers about the reasons for National Board decisions* which can be downloaded from each [National Board website](#).

Commenting publicly on what we do

When we are approached for comment we aim to be as helpful and responsive as we can be. However, we must comply with legal limits. This often means that we cannot comment on individual matters or reveal information that is not already in the public domain. We also cannot undermine the integrity of our investigations.

Information about current restrictions on any registered health practitioner is published on the [online register](#). We also publish regular [quarterly data](#) on our regulatory work in each state and territory. Our [Annual Report](#) contains extensive information on the outcomes of notifications, including information by profession and by state and territory.

Transparency is important for regulation. We welcome the [consultation](#) from Health Ministers on amendments to our legislation to consider whether we should be able to disclose more information about our work.

Our staff

Our staff are at the core of our work to protect the public. We acknowledge their commitment in a busy and demanding regulatory environment. We have increased our staff numbers across AHPRA to respond to growing demand, including additional notifications staff over the last year.

We cannot comment publicly on any specific claims or comments by former members of staff. Like all employers we have a strong interest in addressing concerns raised by any current or former staff member. We also operate a whistle blower line if anyone wants to raise a public interest concern.

In the face of changed community expectations and growing demand, we are continuously changing our notifications processes. Our staff are being supported through these changes by receiving advanced training in communication, including strategies for supporting and assisting distressed callers and support and care for themselves and team members. We are implementing a comprehensive Wellbeing and Support Program for staff.

For more information

- Patients and members of the public with concerns about the care they receive from individual practitioners can call AHPRA on 1300 419 495 or lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 03 9275 9009 (overseas callers).
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 920.